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SUBJECT: DEMARCHE REQUEST: CANADA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE GLOBAL POLIO ERADICATION INITIATIVE

¶1. This is an action request. See paragraph 6.

¶2. SUMMARY. In 2006, there were serious setbacks in the global fight to end polio with increased numbers of polio cases in Nigeria and India, continuing challenges in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and imported cases appearing in countries previously declared polio-free. There is a critical \$60 million funding gap for 2007 and \$355 million for 2008 for the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). The Government of Canada is at a key decision point regarding its contributions to GPEI. This action request is to encourage Canada to meet its Gleneagles commitment for contributions to global polio eradication. Please slug responses to OES/IHB's (Tierra Copeland and Patricia Murphy). End Summary

¶3. BACKGROUND: Substantial progress has been made since the launch of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI) in 1988, when polio was endemic in more than 125 countries, paralyzing 350,000 children each year. The GPEI partnership includes the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Rotary International, and U.S. Government agencies (USAID and the Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention HHS/CDC). The U.S. Government has been the leading financial donor to the effort providing over \$1.3 billion since 1988 and representing nearly thirty percent of global contributions.

¶4. Canada is the fourth largest donor to the Polio Eradication Initiative (US \$182 million contributed since 1988). Canada was the first nation to place polio eradication on the G8 agenda, doing so in 2002 at Gleneagles in the context of the G8 Africa Action Plan. Canada contributed a total of USD \$102.9 million during the 2003-2005 period but has pledged significantly less for the 2006-2008 period (USD \$45.6 million). Canada has a strong interest in Afghanistan and has doubled its commitments of aid to Africa. These regions are very important to polio eradication. The Government of Canada is at a key decision point regarding its contribution to GPEI.

¶5. As noted by U/S Dobriansky in a policy speech on polio delivered October 10, 2006, significant progress has been made globally; still, recent setbacks have put eradication efforts at risk. In 2006, 1,998 people were paralyzed by polio and now only four countries (Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan) still suffer from endemic polio transmission. Polio eradication is feasible, as demonstrated already in many countries around the world. However, donor enthusiasm and financial contributions are waning, even in the face of re-emerging infections and increased risk for polio to regain a global foothold. Challenges facing the polio eradication effort include:

-- There is a major global funding gap of \$60 million needed for GPEI to support vaccination campaigns and emergency operations in outbreak areas for the remainder of 2007. As a result, the WHO anticipates that polio vaccination programs

might be scaled back due to lack of financial resources. In addition, it is estimated that there is a shortfall of pledges of, at least, \$355 million for eradication activities projected for 2008.

-- During the 2004-2005 period, polio spread from Northern Nigeria and India to 21 previously polio-free countries across the Middle East and as far east as Indonesia.

-- Spread of polio has increased in 2006, with twice as many polio cases in five states in Northern Nigeria, and five times as many cases in India compared to the same period in 2005.

-- The remaining areas and populations of polio infections and transmission are among the poorest of the poor and are the most difficult to reach.

-- Socio-political issues have complicated vaccination efforts. For example, in the critical areas of India and Nigeria, there is great distrust of government, government programs, and resistance to vaccination, particularly among Muslim communities.

-- Political will, on the part of the governments of Afghanistan, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan, is being severely tested to follow through on commitments to polio eradication in their respective countries.

¶6. ACTION: Embassy is requested to urge senior officials in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Finance, and Privy Council Office that Canada consider increasing its support for the WHO and UNICEF-led Global Polio Eradication Initiative, including an additional pledge for 2008-2009. Embassy may draw on the following talking points:

Begin Talking Points

-- The United States is very concerned that given the continued endemic transmission of polio in Nigeria, India, Afghanistan, and Pakistan, a threat remains for importations to polio-free countries.

-- The United States acknowledges Canada's strong leadership in placing global polio eradication on the G8 agenda at Gleneagles. We appreciate Canada's exemplary past contributions to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). There is an urgent \$60 million funding gap for the remainder of 2007 and \$355 million for 2008 for GPEI. We urge Canada to maintain its leadership by at least maintaining past levels of financial support to GPEI.

-- The United States has given generously -- \$1.3 billion since 1988 and \$132 million in 2007 alone. We are urging our partners to help close the funding gap.

End Talking Points
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